

Remarks at a Pride Celebration

June 10, 2023

The President. Hello, hello, hello.

Audience members. Joe! Joe! Joe!

The President. Hello, hello, hello.

You know, I was a lucky guy—kid. I had a dad and a mom who—who understood that we meant what we said in our—that sounds corny—in our—we're the most unique nation in the world. We're the only nation that is founded on an idea—not geography, not religion, and not ethnicity—that all men and women are created equal, endowed by their Creator, et cetera.

I'll never forget, I was going down to get an application, when I was in high school, to be a lifeguard in the city pool. And my dad was driving me down on his way to work—going to drop me off.

And Wilmington, Delaware, is the corporate capital of the world. It was anyway. And—[laughter]—but all kidding aside, there's a place called Rodney Square. And the DuPont Building was there; the Hercules building was there—all these major corporations.

And I was getting out of the car to go into the—in the city hall. And there were these two well-dressed men standing on a corner. The light changed. They kissed each other and went in different directions. One went to the DuPont Building; one went to the Hercules building.

And I had never seen that before. I looked at my dad. He looked back at me. He said: "It's simple. They love each other. It's simple." And to me, it's that simple. It's that straightforward.

Scarlet, thank you for introducing me and the—and for the hope and optimism you and your family represent for our entire country.

And to all of you: Happy Pride Month. Happy Pride year. Happy Pride life.

We're joined today by leaders across our administration, which has more proud staff at every level than any administration in American history. Our Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttigieg.

And we have the first and second transgender Americans to the—be confirmed by the United States Senate in history: Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services Admiral Rachel Levine and Under Secretary of Defense Shawn Skelly.

And by the way—by the way, I am proud that back home in Delaware the first transgender State legislator in American history, Sarah McBride.

I also want to thank two people who couldn't be here, but who made this possible: My dear friend Tim Gill and his husband Scott Miller, who is doing a terrific job as my Ambassador to Switzerland.

And it's wonderful to welcome all of you to the—and over a thousand Americans from all across the country. We're gathered here today to honor the extraordinary—and I'm not being solicitous—the extraordinary courage and contributions of the LGBTQ community, to celebrate their legacy and their progress.

And we welcome to the largest Pride Month celebration ever held at the White House. But just the beginning. Jill and I, Kamala and Doug, the entire administration are doing everything we can to advance equality for the LGBTQ community in our Nation—the entire Nation.

As Commander in Chief, I was proud to have ended the ban on transgender Americans serving in the United States military. I signed historic Executive orders strengthening civil rights protections for——

[At this point, the President responded to movement from an audience member.]

He's running from me; I don't know where he is going. *[Laughter]* Do that again, man. You're a sprinter. I can—you can—*[laughter]*—I don't know if he's running to something or from something. I don't know. *[Laughter]*

But look, we provide—we put protections for housing, employment, health care, education, and the justice system. We're combating dangerous and cruel practices of conversion therapy. We're launching a new national strategy to end HIV epidemic by 2030—by 2030. We're working with communities to treat and contain the M-pox outbreak. We're ending the disgraceful practice of banning gay and bisexual men from donating blood.

Making human rights for LGBTQ people around the world—not just here, around the world—a top priority for my foreign policy, including a review of our engagement with Uganda following its recent antigay law, the most extreme in the world.

And last December, we felt such pride here on the South Lawn when I signed the historic Respect for Marriage Act. It protects the marriage of same-sex and interracial couples.

But, for all the progress we've made, we know—we know—a real change and real challenges still remain. When a person can be married in the morning and thrown out of a restaurant for being gay in the afternoon, something is still very wrong in America. That's why the Congress must pass and send me the Equality Act to codify protections for LGBT community.

Joining us today are survivors of the Club Q and Pulse—the shootings that took place—who remind us why we must fully implement the significant gun law that we passed—the most significant in 30 years—that I signed. But it's not done yet. We have to ban assault weapons. And—*[applause]*.

You know, and when families across the country face excruciating decisions to relocate to a different State to protect their child from dangerous anti-LGBTQ laws, we have to act. We have to act as a nation. We need to push back against the hundreds of callous and cynical bills and laws introduced in States targeting transgender children, terrifying families, and criminalizing doctors and nurses.

These bills and laws attack the most basic values and freedoms we have as Americans—that's not hyperbole; that's a fact: the right to be yourself, the right to make your own health decisions, the right to raise your own children.

I recognize, for a lot of folks across this country, maybe it's not you, your kid, your family member going through whatever a transgender child and family is going through. But I think we all agree, if it were you, you'd want the space to figure it out with your family and your doctor—not being told by anybody.

Look, I think we can all agree: No one—no one—should have to fear for their safety in this country. No one should be singled out or demonized or made to feel less than anyone else. There are some things we should never question or put at risk: your life, safety, your dignity. They can never be put at risk, and they are still.

You know, too many people in the LGBT community are worried and afraid about their future and their safety. So today I want to send a message to the entire community, especially to transgender children: You are loved. You are heard. You are understood. And you belong!

And as I've made clear, including in my State of the Union Address, your President and my entire administration has your back. We see who you are: made in the image of God, deserving of dignity, respect, and support.

Two days ago, I announced a series of new initiatives we're taking to protect the LGBT community—Q community. First, ensuring your physical safety. Whether you're organizing a Pride parade, running a small business, or just trying to focus at school, you should have—you shouldn't have to deal with bomb threats, harassment, and violent attacks.

That's why the Department of Homeland Security, with the support of the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services, is launching a safety partnership that's going to provide critical training and support to the community; dedicated resources to better protect festivals, marches, community centers, and businesses; to better protect health care providers serving the community; and help folks report hate crimes.

Second, we're taking to civil—we're take—taking on these civil rights violations, because that's what they are. An example—for example, we're addressing how the growing threat to—book bans may violate the Federal civil rights laws when they target LGBTQ students or students of color and create hostile classroom environments.

Third, we're investing in the future of LGBTQ kids. Last year, we launched a nationwide crisis hotline for the LGBTQ youth who are feeling isolated and overwhelmed. If you need help, if you're worried, if you're just concerned—not sure what to do, you need somebody to talk to, you can now pick up the phone and call 9–8–8 and talk to a counselor who can give you help.

And don't hesitate to call. This year, we're committing more mental health resources and new funding for programs that help families support and affirm their kids, a new Federal initiative to address the LGBTQ homelessness, new proposed regulations requiring States to protect LGBTQ kids in foster care, and so much more.

Let me close with this. I know it's hot out there, and you're probably, "When is the man going to finish?" *[Laughter]*

[The President pretended to drop the microphone.]

[Laughter] Let me close with what I see today.

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Well, thank you.

Well, let me close with what I see today at the White House, and I mean this from the bottom of my heart. I see families who testified in State capitols against laws stripping them of their freedom. I see students who are leading walkouts and protests of hateful bills like "Don't Say Gay."

In all of you—and this is not hyperbole—in all of you what I see is courage. And I mean it sincerely from the bottom of my—I see courage. Courage.

And those who were in the generation before you who stepped up, it's even more courage. They worried not only for their lives, they worried for their jobs. They worried for whether or not they could even be involved at all in the community. Imagine what it took 40 years ago to stand up and say, "I'm gay." What would have happened? No, I mean, people who had to fear for their lives just acknowledging it—just acknowledging it.

We all talk about courage. Well, I see more courage on this lawn than I've seen in any time in the recent past.

But the thing about y'all is, you not only are about courage. You generate so much hope for people, hope and light. You enrich every part of American life: educators, entertainers, entrepreneurs, athletes, actors, artists, scientists, scholars, diplomats, doctors, servicemembers, veterans, and so much more.

As I said—I mean this; I swear to God—you're some of the most—you're some of the bravest and most inspiring people I've ever known. And I've known a lot of good folks. You set an example for the Nation and, quite frankly, for the world. You know, we all move forward when we move together with your joy, with your pride lighting the way.

So today let us proudly remember who we are: the United States of America. And there is nothing, nothing beyond America's capacity when we decide to do it together, as you're doing today. We shall get better every single year.

Happy Pride. Enjoy the celebration.

And in just a few minutes, Jill's going to come back and introduce a performer who embodies joy of this community.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops.

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 1:30 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Houston, TX, resident Scarlet Harvey; Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Health Rachel L. Levine; Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness Shawn G. Skelly; software entrepreneur and philanthropist Tim Gill; Vice President Kamala D. Harris and her husband Douglass C. Emhoff; and musician Betty Who. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of the First Lady and Ms. Harvey.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Pride celebration.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Biden, Jill T.; Buttigieg, Peter P.M.; Emhoff, Douglas C.; Gill, Tim; Harris, Kamala D.; Harvey, Scarlet; Levine, Rachel L.; McBride, Sarah; Miller, Scott C.; Skelly, Shawn G.; Who, Betty.

Subjects: Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness; Assistant Secretary of Health and Human Services for Health; Gun violence, prevention efforts; HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment efforts; Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, equality; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Pride Month; Mental health programs and services; Respect for Marriage Act; Secretary of Transportation; Switzerland, U.S. Ambassador; Transgender servicemembers; Vice President.

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